

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my special order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

HONORING THE PASSING OF
RAFAEL DIAZ-BALART

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart and many fond memories that I stand here today to honor the life and invaluable legacy of Dr. Rafael Diaz-Balart. As a prominent attorney and elected official in his native land of Cuba, Rafael quickly rose to the position of majority leader in the Cuban Republic's House of Representatives before Fidel Castro illegally seized power in the 1959 Communist revolution.

As majority leader, Rafael warned his legislative colleagues of Castro's desire of absolute power, a desire that would be achieved by any means necessary. In a prophetic speech, Rafael said in the legislature of Castro's thugs, "They do not want peace. They do not want a national solution. They do not want democracy or elections or fraternity. Fidel Castro and his group seek only one thing, power, and total power at that. And they want to achieve that power through violence, so that their total power will enable them to destroy every vestige of the constitution and law in Cuba, to institute the most cruel, most barbaric tyranny, a tyranny that would teach the people the true meaning of tyranny."

How sadly correct Rafael Diaz-Balart was so many years ago. Vigilantly opposed to the Communist tyranny and oppression that had taken hold of his country, Dr. Diaz-Balart and his family fled the island. Shortly after leaving Cuba, he founded the White Rose Party, an organization dedicated to fighting against Castro's dictatorial regime and restoring democracy and liberty in Cuba. In addition, his testimony to the United States Senate in 1960 alerted the Nation to the dangers of Castro's government. In his testimony, Rafael provided evidence of Castro's oppression and his abuse of the political dissidents as well as the global threat of communism.

He, like my father Enrique Ros and so many others who fled Cuba due to Castro's dictatorial regime in these four decades, dreamed of a free Cuba, a country where human rights would once again be respected, where political prisoners would be freed, where a democratic multiparty political system would flourish and a free market economy would thrive, thus allowing the Cuban people and their foreign economic partners to own their own businesses and to prosper.

A passionate and dedicated leader, Rafael was a relentless defender of human rights. He along with so many other human rights activists brought Cuba's ongoing human rights violations to the attention of the United States Government, to the attention of the American people and, indeed, to the international community. In addition, Rafael demonstrated his ability to fight not only for the Cuban and the Cuban-American community but for all oppressed people throughout the world. His determination and his resoluteness have guided me in my own career as a public servant from my beginnings in the Florida State legislature to my current position in the United States Congress. I was inspired by his endless commitment to the Cuban people and to all individuals living under dictatorial rule.

His sons Rafael, Jose, Lincoln and Mario continue this legacy of promoting peace, liberty and the rule of law, a legacy that began with Rafael Diaz-Balart, Sr., the namesake of Florida International University's college of law. Perhaps Rafael's strongest political legacy is the one that he has passed on to his children and to his grandchildren, especially his sons Jose and Rafael and our esteemed colleagues serving with us in the U.S. House of Representatives, Congressmen LINCOLN and MARIO DIAZ-BALART.

I am privileged to have known and to have worked closely with Rafael and the Diaz-Balart family throughout my professional career as a legislator. Together with them, I will continue to promote a free and democratic Cuba and democracy throughout the world.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Dr. Rafael Diaz-Balart, who was a wonderful friend, a loving husband, a dedicated father and one of the most outstanding members of our Florida community. My thoughts and my prayers go out to his family during this difficult time. He will be sorely missed by all.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PALLONE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my special order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

LOBBYING REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, in the past few months and days, a constant stream of headlines has opened the public's eye to the relationship between lawmakers and lobbyists and what goes on in this town and how we make our laws. Professional lobbyists have become a virtual "back office" for Congress and Congressmen, serve as travel agents, employment agencies and authors of legislation. In the past 6 years, lobbying expenditures have more than doubled to \$3 billion annually, nearly twice as much as we spend on campaigns. That is what they spend trying to influence the type of legislation we have. Whether it is on pharmaceutical legislation, prescription drugs, whether it is on the tax legislation, whether it is on energy legislation, the amount spent by lobbyists has doubled trying to influence the Members of Congress.

Yet while the number of professional lobbyists and their fees have increased, only one in five lobbyists required to register actually does. Of the 250 top lobbying firms, 210 have failed to file one or more of the necessary documents. The bottom line is that the special interests benefit from weak reporting, nonexistent oversight and toothless penalties while the credibility of the United States Congress, this entire institution and the Members who serve in it, suffers.

We have had in the past debates about campaign finance reform and proper debates about the relationship between donors and congressional candidates. It is time now to have a debate and pass legislation about the relationship between professional lobbyists and Members of Congress. The last major lobbying reforms were over 10 years ago. It is time to update our laws to reflect the explosive growth and increasing influence of professional lobbyists on this institution, the people's House.

For all those reasons, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MEEHAN), the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) and I have introduced the Lobbying and Ethics Reform Act. Our bill creates a code of official conduct for Congress. This code of conduct would close the revolving door by requiring former Members and staff to wait 2 years before coming back to lobby the institution they had worked at prior. The bill also ends the practice of lobbyists serving as congressional travel agents by arranging lavish junkets for Members. Our bill would require congressional travel to conform to expense guidelines similar to those of other government employees, so it is actually the work that trip is intended to do and work on that trip rather than it becoming a lavish vacation and a working trip in name only. We also require lobbyists to disclose their past connections, previous Hill employers and financial activities on a public database.

The Meehan-Emanuel bill increases the penalties for failing to comply with the Lobbying Disclosure Act. It also

creates a bipartisan House task force to recommend ways to reinvigorate ethics oversight and enforcement. It would require the Government Accountability Office to report twice a year on the state of oversight and enforcement.

Mr. Speaker, the gavel of this institution when it comes down should mark the opening of the people's House, not the auction house. Unless we reform the relationship between lobbyists and Members of Congress, we cannot restore the public's faith in the people's House. We are suffering from a systematic problem requiring an institutional solution.

Legislation here that we produced in the last Congress, the pharmaceutical industry spent \$154 million lobbying Members of Congress. When we were working on the reimportation legislation of pharmaceutical products, there were two lobbyists for every Member of Congress. The prescription drug bill was passed in a year in which lobbyists for the pharmaceutical industry was one of the biggest spenders on lobbying Members of Congress ended up resulting in an additional \$150 billion of profits for the pharmaceutical industry over a 10-year period of time.

Just the other day, we voted, this Congress, on an energy bill, a badly needed bill that did not deal with gas prices at the pump and yet gave tax credits, the public's tax money, to the wealthiest corporations who are making the biggest profits. Even the President acknowledged that it was wrong. Why? Because this institution is being lobbied by members that have the right to have their voices heard but not the right to have their voices literally drowning out the public's voice and individuals who vote for us.

It is time for this institution and the Members of Congress of both parties to come together, change the way professional lobbyists relate to Members of Congress, how they relate to the institution, whether there is a revolving door that goes from here, you go to a place of employment and whether you have in fact the transparency and the disclosure that is required, because in truth this is the whole cloud that exists, exists over all the institution. It requires all of us to work on dealing with this.

Mr. Speaker, we have a duty to ensure that the voices of the American people are not drowned out by the voices of the professional lobbyists working the halls of Congress. Only through lobbying reform can we restore the integrity of the Congress and retain the people's trust. We work on important issues here but not so important that it must literally push out the other voices. There is time and again, whether it is dealing with the pharmaceutical industry, the corporate tax bill, the energy bill, other pieces of legislation, you can mark literally the amount of money spent by the lobbying community and the type of legislation this institution passes.

When that gavel goes down, it is intended to open the people's House, not the auction house.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

IN SUPPORT OF LIEUTENANT PANTANO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I have discussed at length how, a year ago in Iraq, a Marine second lieutenant, Mario Pantano, made a split-second battlefield decision to shoot two Iraqi insurgents who refused to follow his orders to stop their movement towards him.

Two and a half months later a sergeant under his command, who never even saw the shooting and who was earlier demoted by Pantano for his lack of leadership abilities, accused him of murder. Now Lieutenant Pantano is facing a possible court-martial for two premeditated murders, a charge that can be punished by death.

Two weeks ago, the Marines held an article 32 hearing on the case. Now the hearing officer has received an extension until Friday to determine his recommendation about whether this should move forward to a court-martial.

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Mr. Speaker, I stand here tonight, as I have many other nights, in support of Lieutenant Pantano. I have always maintained the innocence of Lieutenant Pantano, and I believe the hearing produced information that should conclusively prove his innocence.

During the hearing, it became clear that Sergeant Coburn, who accused Lieutenant Pantano of these actions, was not a credible witness. This sergeant has been demoted for his lack of leadership; and even while testifying, he was forced to admit that he recently disobeyed orders about publicly discussing this case. News reports from hearings recounted that during his testimony, Sergeant Coburn said "I don't know" or "I can't remember" over 50

times. It is inconceivable to me that these charges can move forward when the primary witness is someone who did not actually see the shooting and whose testimony was riddled with contradictory statements.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard from so many people across this Nation who want this Marine exonerated. Like me, they believe he should never have been charged in the first place.

I have the utmost confidence and faith in the United States Marine Corps that in the next few days they will do what is the right thing by correcting this mistake and dismissing all charges against Lieutenant Pantano. I fear that if Lieutenant Pantano faces a court-martial for his actions, there may come a time when some other Marine, soldier, sailor, or airman will pause to second guess his or her decision and those few seconds may mean the difference between life and death for them.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot send the wrong message to our men and women in uniform. To instill doubt into the minds of our Nation's defenders places their lives and the security of our Nation in jeopardy.

I certainly hope that the Article 32 proceedings will finally bring out the truth in this case and bring closure to Lieutenant Pantano's family so that they may move forward with their lives.

By all accounts Lieutenant Pantano was an exceptional Marine. During the Article 32 hearing, many of those who served under him testified to his leadership ability and their sense of comfort and safety under his command. I pray that this week the hearing officer will recommend dismissal of all charges so that Marines can welcome back one of their finest officers and so Lieutenant Pantano may return to the Corps he loves so much.

Mr. Speaker, I continue to ask my colleagues to research this case and consider supporting House Resolution 167, my resolution to support Lieutenant Pantano as he faces this battle. And I encourage all of the Members to also visit his mother's Web site at www.defendthedefenders.org. I repeat: www.defendthedefenders.org, and learn more about this fine young Marine. I would be proud to call him my son or son-in-law.

I close, Mr. Speaker, by asking God to please bless the Pantano family and ask God to please bless all of our men and women in uniform and their families. And I ask God to please continue to bless America.

ABU GHRAIB SCANDAL: WHERE DOES THE BUCK STOP?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARCHANT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to discuss a vital issue that has